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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2008/1.

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Statement

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), among the first group of non-governmental organizations to receive consultative status with the United Nations, has monitored every session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The fifty-second session offers an opportunity for Member States to demonstrate their commitment to the goals of women's empowerment, human rights and gender equality, goals WILPF has continually worked towards since its inception in 1915 as part of its ongoing work to prevent armed conflict and to establish the conditions for sustainable peace on a global scale.

WILPF recognizes the many commitments expressed by Member States and applauds the concrete achievements by governments and the UN system towards realizing equality between women and men as outlined in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations. Unfortunately, a significant gap between policy and practice still remains. We look forward to the Commission's addressing the persistent gaps in implementing policy commitments, particularly to the role played by the failure to allocate adequate human and economic resources to the implementation of gender equality goals.

WILPF looks forward to Member States' evaluation of their prior commitments on "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding." While laudable work is being undertaken, particularly through efforts to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), much remains to be done. Women remain excluded from or marginalized in decision-making on the full spectrum of security issues, within peace processes and within the UN system itself.

In the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, it is unclear whether commitments to include women in peacebuilding have made a practical difference on the ground. While there is a lack of demonstrated political will to ensure women's participation, more tangible still is the poor commitment of resources to these issues, despite agreement at the forty-eighth session to "continue to make resources available nationally and internationally for prevention of conflict and ensure women's participation in the elaboration and implementation of strategies for preventing conflict."

WILPF thus welcomes the Commission's consideration of the important theme of Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. In developing policy in this area, it is critical that clear and strong connections be drawn between this and the realization of all other commitments to development and gender equality made by the Commission and Member States; including commitments to women's full and equal participation. It is not simply that women have the right to participate as equals. It is also that without women's participation and empowerment and without gender equality, sustainable peace, sustainable development and true human security are unattainable.

As former Secretary-General Kofi Annan articulated:

> "study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women .... And I would also venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended."[1]

WILPF welcomed the recognition of the links between participation, equality and development in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. In particular, WILPF welcomed the recognition that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and outcome of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly "is an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration." This contribution is not possible without resources and gender-centered financing policy. The failure to finance gender equality is the failure to finance development and human security.

The consideration of Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment requires providing direct, sustained and increased financial and human resources to discrete budget lines, and support to women's groups and organizations. It is, however, critical also to look beyond this level and type of support. Financing for Gender Equality is not just about adding more resources to existing efforts. It is also about how resources are spent by government in the economy as a whole. WILPF welcomes the work done by some governments to engage in gender responsive budgeting and calls on all governments to do so and to enhance these efforts. This involves not only analysing the differential impact of government spending on men and women but also offers a means to critically reflect on government spending priorities and to prioritize human security and gender equality.

WILPF finds it unacceptable that despite the many commitments made to gender equality and women's empowerment, the figures tell a different story:

- Women make up 70 percent of the world's poor and 67% of the world's illiterate. They own just one per cent of assets worldwide;[2]
- According to a 1995 UNDP study, more than two-thirds of the world's unpaid work is done by women – the equivalent of $11 trillion (approximately half of the world's GDP);
- Out of $69 billion of overseas development assistance in 2003, only $2.5 billion, or 3.6%, was earmarked for gender equality as a significant or principal objective.[3] Yet, in the three year period from 2002 to 2004, US military aid to Israel alone totaled over $9 billion with another $6 billion to Egypt and $4 billion to Pakistan;[4]

[1] United Nations Press Release SG/SM/9738, WOM/1489, 25 Feb 2005.
[2] UNIFEM, World Poverty Day 2007, Investing in Women – Solving the Poverty Puzzle, (2007).
[3] Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, *Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' Meeting: Policy Brief*, (2007).
[4] *Collateral Damage*, The Center for Public Integrity, (2007) http://www.publicintegrity.org/militaryaid/regions.aspx.

- Of $20 billion in bilateral aid in 2001-2005, an OECD DAC study reports only $5 billion was allocated to projects promoting gender equality; the cost of approximately 2 weeks of the occupation of Iraq;[5]
- The combined budgets of the UN women's entities is only $65 million,[6] only 0.005% of world military expenditure of $1.204 trillion in 2006;[7]
- The entire budget of the only operational women's entity – UNIFEM – in 2006 was only $57 million, only 2 % of the $2.34 billion budget of UNICEF for the same period;[8]
- The World Bank estimates the cost of interventions to promote gender equality under MDG 3 is $7-13 per capita. The world's military expenditure in 2006 amounted to $184 per capita.[9]

What is clear is that in scales that matter, commitments to gender equality are not yet real. No amount of policy will make a difference unless: gender equality is seen as a critical part of public finance management; is factored into macroeconomic policy and development financing; and is seen as more important than weapons.

WILPF calls on Member States:

- To invest in human security, equality and sustainable peace and to end the prioritization of war and military spending and the impunity enjoyed by war and weapons profiteers.[10]
- To strengthen the development and human rights work of the United Nations by strengthening and better resourcing its gender equality architecture as a critical aspect of financing for gender equality.
- To include women as senior decision-makers in economic and trade policy, including through ensuring their input in the decision-making of supra-national institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and Bretton Woods Institutions. WILPF calls on Member States to provide mechanisms by which women are guaranteed an opportunity to contribute input into the decision-making processes of these institutions at a local level and that these take account of the needs of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- To pressure the Security Council to implement Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, which charges it with formulating a system to regulate armaments and reduce military expenditures, in order to promote international peace and security and free up human and economic resources for development.
- To participate in the UN Register of Conventional Arms in order to enhance transparency of international arms transfers, procurement through national production, holdings, and relevant policies, and in the UN Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures to enhance

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[5] Congressional Research Service, *Report for US Congress, The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and other Global War on Terror Operations since 9/11*, (2007), RL33110.

[6] Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups, Jan. 2005.

[7] SIPRI, Recent Trends in Military Expenditure, http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_trends.html.

[8] UNIFEM UNICEF Annual Reports 2006.

[9] SIPRI, Recent Trends in Military Expenditure, http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_trends.html.

[10] 1995 UNDP.

transparency of spending on military personnel, operations, maintenance, procurement, construction, research, and development.

WILPF looks forward to the development of policy during this fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women that will ensure a gender-perspective in the 2008 follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development in Qatar and the follow-up to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana.

As a 92-year old organization, WILPF continues to work toward collective human security and sustainable peace and away from militarism and economic violence, in collaboration with civil society, governmental and international actors, including within the UN system. We look forward to working with others from around the world to dismantle the prevailing culture of militarism and create a culture of peace in which gender inequality, racism and discrimination, economic injustice, violence and oppression are absent and in which women are full and equal participants.